Chapter II

War and Economics: A Game of Business and Capitalism

D.W. MacKenzie in “Does Capitalism Require War?” explains the connection between capitalism and war and how others view the nature of this relation. Some argue that economy is generated to meet the demands of war expenses and others argue that war is needed to generate means to enhance and promote the economy of a country. Some think that war is used as “shock therapy to get the economy on its feet” (MacKenzie para. 18). MacKenzie states that Paul Krugman in “Stocks and Bombs” believes that “the September 11th attacks might improve economic conditions by stimulating business investment. … [and that] prosperity emerges from devastation” (para. 4). War, as many believe, enhances the level of economy in capitalist countries. Warren, as many say, enhances the level of economy in capitalist countries. If they do not attack other nations for the game of business, they engage other countries in conflict so that their game is achieved. MacKenzie states that “Capitalists even conspire to promote war, as a means of reaping grim profits from armaments production” (para. 3). This idea is central to Al-Hakim’s The World Is A Comedy (1974). Al-Hakim (spelled as Al-Hakim in this book) in A Conversation with the Planet Earth defines the economic power as “the first power and for its sake appeared all other powers in the form of methods” (Conversation 74). He also associates this power with troubles when it is identified with domination (Conversation 75). He further states that those nations which compete with each other to achieve this power are devoured by wars (Conversation 76). He suggests that “economic co-operation, whether in the form of integration or exchange … is the best way of eliminating the notion of destructive domination” (Conversation 76). Al-Hakim thinks that the states use their economic power to facilitate the process of manufacturing and producing weapons of mass destruction instead of directing it towards the welfare of humanity and the poor nations. But nations use this power to attack and destroy others and use the latest technology to inflict suffering upon powerless nations. The capitalist countries also compete with each other to achieve the maximum level of profit by colonising other countries or through military deals with several developing counties to keep them...
under their domination. This is how war and capitalism are viewed in an article on the internet: “war is capitalism’s actual way of being and developing … diplomatic war initially, actual war afterwards, when those antagonisms which are inextricably linked to capitalism’s process of expansion reach a level of extreme tension and seek their «outlet» in organised, armed violence, in real war” (“Capitalism is War” para. 1).

War, according to capitalists, organises and fixes the economy of a particular country which peace can not. This is what Brecht in the very beginning of Mother Courage has communicated through the sergeant appearing on a highway outside the town of Dalarna recruiting for the Swedish army. This is the view towards war which is generally held by the capitalists:

... Disgusting! How many horses have they got in this town? How many young men? Nobody knows! They haven’t bothered to count them! That is peace for you. ... It takes a war to fix that. In a war, everyone registers, everyone’s name’s on the list. Their shoes are stacked, their corn’s in the bag, you count it all up. – cattle, men. Et cetera … That’s the story: no organization, no war. (Courage 3-4).

The sergeant refers to the war as the order and foundation of the world and that all the resources of the world are directed to support this ‘order’. All man’s powers and natural resources are exploited by war and the working classes are being taken advantage of to support this system. The only ones who profit from war, as Al-Hakim’s Comedy dramatises, are rulers, leaders and businessmen. Brecht also attempts to communicate a similar view to his audience through Mother Courage (1939) pointing out that this ‘order’ exhausts the society which lives on its productions. He begins his play with this clear thinking to make his audience reflect on how capitalists and warmongers think about war.

Both Al-Hakim and Brecht felt that their governments had paid more attention to the military equipment and weapons and tried to compete for armament. Following this policy, the two countries were always engaged in confrontations and always preparing for war – Germany under the leadership of Hitler and Egypt under the leadership of Nasser. Both the writers felt that war preparations cost their countries a lot and always pushed them to deteriorating economic conditions. Hitler’s threat and his growing capitalistic motives possibly made Brecht alert to this danger and therefore, he kept warning his people of this danger in order to rise against this kind of “rampant Nazism and Fascism” (Leach 128). In The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui
(1941), Brecht attacked Hitler and in one of his poems called him ‘Führer’, meaning the housekeeper. In the opening of his Alphabet poem written for children, Brecht ironically sings:

Adolf Hitler’s facial hair
Is a curious affair
It’s what I’d call uncouth:
So small a toothbrush for so big mouth

(qtd. in Thomson, “Brecht Lives” 31)

Brecht wrote a good deal of works denouncing capitalism which is built on war and violence. *Mother Courage* is a just example of his views against these two evils. Kenneth Fowler argues that Brecht believed that capitalism “is a barbaric, inhuman oppressive, unjust, and unfree system” (133). The world is full of evil people like Joe Keller, Mother Courage, or the Reaper as in *All My Sons, Mother Courage* and *The World Is A Comedy* respectively. These people who are real war-parasites favour war because their business thrives on it and therefore they have to be eliminated. Brecht, Miller and Al-Hakim gave us different windows to look at capitalism in relation to war. Brecht used the Thirty Years War, which had taken place in the 17th century to denounce the modern war and capitalism: Miller through the tragedy of a common man dramatised the sufferings of two post-World War families as a result of the capitalistic dreams of Keller; Al-Hakim imports a para-psychological phenomenon known as the transmigration of souls to bring the idea that mankind always attempts to live in a world devoid of war and violence. With cyclical attempts, Khalid, the central protagonist who takes different names and roles in the play, is drawn back to the circle of violence again and again.

Brecht, Miller and Al-Hakim invariably believe that modern wars are generated as a result of capitalism. There are other causes which sometimes lead to war, but economic motives, profiteering and balance of power are considered essential in this respect. Economic motives are associated with many wars in the past and the present time. In the past, nations invaded other nations to gain economic power. But, capitalism is associated with the modern wars. Domination, power, and economy are the major factors which characterise the modern wars. Miller’s *All My Sons*, Brecht’s *Mother Courage*, and Al-Hakim’s *The World Is A Comedy* dramatise war as a game based on capitalism and business. They are attempting to explain that business and profiteering from war matter a lot for some individuals and regimes even
if this profit is at the expense of their family and relatives. Their plays make it clear that war is just waged for material gain and for exploiting working-class people. Courage holds business deals and ends up losing all her children in the actions of war. Brecht intends to suggest that war is always a loss particularly for the common people like Courage. He always argues that the big profits are not made by little people but by the big ones and by the makers of wars and weapons. Al-Hakim as well thinks that the war traders and the weapon-manufacturers are always the same. There is hardly any difference between the two. He suggests that manufacturing of weapons must be ruled out so that there will be no weapons and hence no waging of war. Out of humanism, Al-Hakim insists that humanity should reach a decision to prevent war and demolish all the atomic weapons and warn all nations against wars and their terrible consequences. His philosophical dialogues address the mind rather than the heart and attempt to persuade the reader that war is meaningless. His play *The World Is A Comedy* is a call to implement peace and to do away with armaments. It is different from the other two plays in its treatment of war. The play does not take up a story, but through argumentative dialogue and logical presentation, it dramatises that war is absolutely meaningless and is meant for profit. Al-Hakim blames the manufacturers of weapons, who are the source of real trouble for the society and mankind. It is similar to *All My Sons* in its stance against the manufacturers of weapons who care only for the success of their business.

There are war plays which mock the economic motives behind wars such as Littlewood’s *Oh, What a Lovely War*. Like *Mother Courage*, *Oh, What a Lovely War* exposes the kind of relation between politician and businessmen during the WWI and blame them for the mass-slaughter: “the blame for mass-slaughter on politicians, generals and wealthy profiteers … arm-manufacturers from Britain, France, Germany and America meet with a Swiss banker at a grouse-shoot” (Thomson, Brecht: *Mother Courage* 156) to discuss loss and profit from war. This play mocks that “21,000 American businessmen become millionaires from the war” (*Lovely War* 46). Arden’s play *Serjeant Musgrave’s Dance* is also an explicit attack on war and capitalism. It exposes how a certain class of people, as the Mayor in the play, controls and exploits the masses. The Mayor wants the coalminers to accept low wages or they will be fired due to the low prices of coal. This play tragically explicates how ordinary people become powerless and are satisfied to simply meet their most basic needs.

In spite of this view against capitalism, it is important to note that there are
many who believe that capitalism is a good system which is based on hard work and fair competition. The capitalist system rewards those who works hard and use their mind and punishes those who are lazy and dependent. Many argue that capitalism is behind the advancement in technology and inventions and prefer it to their system of organisation. This chapter focuses on how Brecht, Miller, and Al-Hakim look at capitalism as a bad system. Brecht looks at it as a system that is based on exploitation of the poor who were driven into wars with other nations for the sake of territorial expansion – an absolutely capitalist objective. Miller looks at capitalism as a system of cut-throat competition and an abomination against humanity. It was this competition which led Joe Keller to trade in cracked parts for the planes. Al-Hakim looks at capitalism as a system of domination and power which spread after the Cold War era. This system appeared in this era as a system of power based on trading with arms and nuclear weapons.

Mother Courage and Her Children (1939)

Brecht lived in a warring society which was involved in wars in the past and the present and was likely to get involved in another war as predicted in Mother Courage. Many European powers had gone through severe war in the seventeenth century known as the ‘Thirty Years War’ during which famine, disease and starvation spread all over the continent. In modern times, Germany again went through the WWI and the Nazi regime plunged the country into another war. Brecht warned that Germany would experience a war similar to the ‘Thirty Years War’ if capitalists continued to be in power. The fascist system, according to Brecht, can “be fought by treating it as capitalism” (Willett. The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht 194). For Brecht, Fascism and Nazism were only variants of capitalism which live on war: “…the only difference between the fascist and capitalist countries was that in the latter ‘the butchers wash their hands before bringing in meat’” (Willett. The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht 194). In a conversation with Benjamin, Brecht has commented on the tyrannical system of his country: “they’re planning devastation on an icy scale. That’s why they can’t reach agreement with the church, which also geared to thousands of years. And they’ve proletarianized me too. It isn’t that they’ve taken my house, my fish-pond and my car from me; they’ve also robbed me of my stage and my audience” (Benjamin 120).
The Thirty Years War was described as a religious war, but Brecht underestimated this point of view in order to underline its economic and political motives. In the notes to his play, as pointed out by Dickson, Brecht thought that “the Thirty Years War ...was one of the first large-scale wars that capitalism brought upon Europe” (Utopia 97). Brecht wanted to draw his audience to the fact that capitalism was the central design behind this war which was also true of Germany in the 1930s. The question that one may ask here is that: Why did Brecht make use of the ‘Thirty Years War’ which happened in 17th century as a subject for his play in the 20th century? The answer could be that he wanted to warn Germany and the whole of Europe against the rise of Nazis and their capitalistic and economic motives which could lead to another war similar in consequences to that of Thirty Years War. This war was in the memory of the Germans in which Germany lost two thirds of its nation as Bentley points out in his preface to Mother Courage: “For Germany the Thirty Years War was unmitigated disaster. Commerce, industry, even agriculture, came to halt. German culture bred in its prosperous cities was reduced to a charred recollection. The population was halved, wolves roamed the streets, famine and pestilence raged through the land” (xxxvii). Using the ‘Thirty Years War’, Brecht wanted the people to be aware of the danger looming under the leadership of Hitler. After Brecht saw the direction his country had taken, he was quite sure that the Fascists were a real threat to humanity. Being a Marxist ideologue, Brecht wanted to convey the idea that capitalism always thrived on war and had to be fought. He also wanted to tell his audience that even the ‘Thirty Years War’, which seemed to be religious to many, was capitalistic in nature. With this Marxist understanding of the Thirty Years War, Brecht warned people of the Fascist and Nazi system which was similar to the capitalistic motives of the kings and rulers of the 17th century. Brecht was well-known for his criticism of capitalism and its exploitive system which resulted in wars and violence. He made some remarks that war and capitalism were inseparable and interdependent. Fowler argues that Brecht’s views are that wars were an integral part of capitalism:

In 1937 he described capitalism as a social system that both gives rise to war and needs war. In 1939, the year in which he wrote Mutter Courage, Brecht joined the two more closely and labelled capitalism a thoroughly crisis-ridden and warlike economic system. And in 1955
Brecht characterized capitalism as a system of production based on a 
destructive and warlike principle.” (122)

Brecht believed that socialism was the solution to contemporary world 
problems. He wrote a great deal of work to publicise his socialist thoughts which, as 
he thought, encouraged mutual cooperation between individuals and nations and 
condemned war and violence. He always remarked that capitalism, which spread all 
over Europe, encouraged and promoted war situation between nations to enhance its 
economy. In a conversation with Brecht, Benjamin stated that Brecht thought that 
“socialist economy doesn’t need war, and that is why it is opposed to war” (116). He 
admired the socialist countries which according to him opposed war and promoted 
peace and he confirmed this view to Benjamin by saying that “‘peace-loving nature of 
the Russian people’ is an expression of this and nothing else” (116-17).

Brecht did his best to promote the Marxist thought through his works. His 
epic theatre, based on Marxist principles, was meant to analyse people’s attitudes and 
behaviours towards certain social and political issues. In his epic theatre, Brecht used 
what is called the V-Effect to distance and alienate his audience from identifying 
themselves with his characters. With the help of this distancing technique, Brecht 
urged his audience to ask questions and criticise the prevailing issues in their society 
so that they could change it for the better – an ideology central to the Marxist thought. 
These ideas resulted in clash with the Nazis, especially after staging his play The 
Mother. Germany became unsafe for him and in exile he attacked the fascist and Nazi 
ideologies. As a Marxist, Brecht believed that peace could only be achieved by 
eliminating capitalism. He envisaged that the 1930s Europe was under a large-scale 
war with capitalistic motives with the rise of Nazism. This time too, Europe would 
face similar destruction like what happened in the 17th century, if people did not stand 
against the system of war led by Hitler.

In writing Mother Courage, Brecht used the epic theatre which was initiated 
by Piscator. Breaking away from the Aristotelian theatre, Brecht developed 
techniques such as alienation and distancing to give his audience a chance to probe 
into social issues with the aim of changing the society around them positively. He 
used epic theatre to illustrate the Marxist view that man was alterable and capable of 
changing the society around him. Unlike the Aristotelian theatre which focused on 
emotions that depicted the existing social condition as acceptable and satisfactory, 
Brecht’s epic theatre focused on reason and intellect and encouraged people to
criticise and question the prevailing issues to bring about a progressive change in the society. Brecht felt that the Germans were like Mother Courage who helped and allowed the ‘big people’ exercise power on them. The Germans did not realise that the war would cost them taxes and also their lives and that they would have worked to end their misfortunes (Sperberg 1-2). With this passive inactivity on the part of the Germans, Hitler’s power on the country grew out of control and became an alarming threat. If people stood together to fight Hitler’s war system, then they could stop this war and any other wars. But, for Brecht, the Germans were like Mother Courage who cut her way through war thinking that war could bring her profit. As a result of the growing passivity of the people, Hitler plunged the country into the Second World War as Brecht prophesied in Mother Courage.

In this segment of the chapter, an attempt will be made to discuss and analyse the behaviour of Mother Courage as a culpable merchant whose business thrives on war. The message that Brecht wants his audience to get through Mother Courage is that war is a game of business and capitalism and that these two evils can be fought and eliminated if people act positively. Brecht in Mother Courage refutes the argument that war is fate or a natural disaster and stresses that war is a human design. He thinks that people have the power to end it and fight it at all levels. Brecht through the characterisation of Courage informs his audience that it is the people who contribute to the war and feed its machine. If they criticise and question the prevailing conditions, then the society may be transformed for the better.

Brecht made many textual changes in the play to emphasise and denounce the business-oriented motives of the capitalists as Christopher M. Sperberg pointed out in his introduction (1). Brecht’s view to portray Courage as a capitalist failed several times and could not fully maintain his anti-war stance based on denunciation of capitalism. There are certain occasions when the spectator identified himself with the characters which went against Brecht’s intension. Martin Esslin pointed out this flaw: “Without identification and empathy, each person would be irrevocably imprisoned within himself (131).” Therefore, Brecht worked on the play several times to demonstrate that Courage represents the spirit of capitalism. Despite the distancing devices to eliminate any chances which might lead the spectators to identify themselves with the character, Brecht created scenes which moved the audience’s emotion. For instance, in 1949 production of Mother Courage, Helene Weigel, knowing Brecht’s intention in depicting Mother Courage as a business woman, saved
some money when she was bargaining with the villagers for the burial rituals of her daughter, Kattrin. With this physical gesture of holding back some money, Weigel intended to draw the audience’s attention to Courage’s business mind even at such a moment of extreme agony. Even at this time when her daughter was to be buried, Courage still had the capacity to bargain and make profit.

Mother Courage is indisputably a play about war. The war covers the period from 1624-1636, and includes three nation-states, Sweden, Poland and Germany. Wars have occurred in all periods of human history. Sometimes, they have been waged in the name of religion with the ostensible purpose of spreading a particular one and proselytising others. The war dramatised in Mother Courage is said to be a religious war pleasing unto God. In Scene III, the Chaplain comments on the nature of a religious war, “my dear cook, but to fall in this war is not a misfortune, it’s a blessing. This is a war of religion. Not just any old war but a special one, a religious one, and therefore pleasing unto God” (Courage 24). The cook further elaborates on the nature of war in the following words, “… It’s a war because there’s fleecing, bribing, plundering, not to mention a little raping, but it’s different from all other wars because it’s a war of religion. That’s clear. All the same, it makes you thirsty” (Courage 24). This view that the war enacted in the play is a religious war pleasing unto God is widely shared by several characters.

Sometimes wars have been waged in human history to vindicate national honour or to take revenge for real or imagined offence to the pride and dignity of a people. At other times wars have taken place in the name of lebensraum, which amounts to a ruthless expansion into the territory of neighbouring states. From the Marxist viewpoint, however, all wars are essentially class-wars on a large scale transcending national boundaries. For example, the two world wars that ravaged the world in the twentieth century were from the Marxist viewpoint rooted in the economic interests of predator capitalist-imperialist states of the world. The wars of the last century were actually driven by the lust for the exploitation of the natural resources and cheap labour power of the militarily weak nations of Asia and Africa. But they were represented as wars necessary for civilising the backward countries steeped in ignorance and deprived of the blessings of the enlightened Christianity. In the name of dispelling the darkness of the so-called superstitions, magic cults and cultural rituals practiced by the peoples of Asia and Africa, entire nations were enslaved and oppressed. And it was considered to be the destiny of the Western
nations – the white man’s burden – to carry the torch of the noble Christian religion to the dark continents where imagined savagery of the most primitive kind must be extirpated. The reality of the wars was quite different however. They were unleashed for the ruthless exploitation of the people and for plundering their wealth. They were colonised and enslaved so that the nations of the west could grow richer. However, Marxism maintains, and Mother Courage demonstrates that all wars have economic origin; they are all organised and executed with the only aim to earn huge profit through wars waged against resource-rich but militarily weak nations. Wars make for good business. Petit-bourgeoisie earn a little profit through petty and demeaning acts of cheating and trickery, while big bourgeoisie capture and gobble up nations one after another to build up empires. A very recent example of this kind of war is the invasion of Iraq by America. It has taken place ostensibly in the name of democracy and freedom; in essence it is a war designed to take control of the oil wells of Iraq and exploit them for the good of the Americans.

This view of war, which is prototypically Marxist, informs and organises Brecht’s Mother Courage. In Scene VII, Courage gives expression to this view:

If war don’t suit your disposition
When victory comes you will be dead.
War is a business proposition:
Not with cream-cheese but steel and lead. (Courage 55)

Her song, a clear manifestation of the futility of war, juxtaposes the advantage and disadvantage of war. In the beginning of her song she expresses the view that war is a ‘business proposition’ even if the means are guns and swords. The rest of the song dramatises the tragic side of war and stresses that even those who stay back at home are dying. So the mercantile side of the war is much better for her. Similar view towards war is expressed in Scene III where Courage stresses the economic character of war, and how economic interests govern and regulate the behaviours of individuals caught up in the frenzy of this war. Brecht especially shows how all sacred human relations are subordinated to the lust for money and how cash-nexus binds human beings together under capitalism, particularly during war periods. Brecht shows how Courage gambles away the life of her son in order to save the cash-box. She haggles over the amount of money to be given to those who will ultimately shoot him dead. In Scene III, Courage says “I believe – I’ve haggled too long” (Courage 39). It is followed by Yvette saying “you have done it – with your haggling” (Courage 39).
This led to a tragic end to her son who was shot and was thrown on the garbage dump. The situation became more tragic when Courage refused to acknowledge him as her son, flesh of her flesh, and blood of her blood. Her fear of business termination led her to act cowardly denying her relation to her ‘dear’ son. Many criticised her for being weak prefer business over intimate relations.

In brief, this play is about all wars and how profit-motive pervades all ranks and all individuals, be they religious priests, generals of the army, peasants in the countryside or kings. They are all people swayed by the lust for money and unable to escape the main driving force of history behind capitalism. This emotional play dramatises Marx’s characterisation of capitalism in its first phase around the time of the Thirty Years War in which most of the major European states were involved besides the Catholic Holy Roman Emperor and some German Protestant states. Karl Marx wrote in 1848 in his Communist Manifesto the following:

The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his ‘natural superiors’, and has left no other nexus between people than naked self-interest, than callous ‘cash payment’. It has drowned out the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom -- Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation. (53)

It does not require much perception to see Brecht’s Mother Courage as a restatement of Marx’s observations on the nature of capitalism under conditions of dramatic art. Brecht’s Marxist view clearly informs this play stressing that the expected war in Europe would take place as a result of the capitalists whose aim is to exploit the common people for the sake of their own profit and power. If the common people, who have been the object of exploitation, change and improve themselves, the society around them will respond to this transformation.

Courage does not like peace and gets annoyed when she hears about a peace break. She favours war so that her business flourishes and prospers. She does not
appreciate the victory of one party over another, because this means to her an end to her business: “I have nothing but losses from your victory” (Courage 46), remarks Courage to a soldier. War for her is a good market to sell out her merchandise, but peace annoys her: “Don’t tell me peace has broken out – when I’ve just done and bought all these supplies” (Courage 57).

Courage’s war-loving nature has already cost her one of her sons, Swiss Cheese. The news of his execution shocked her. She decides to stop her business journey when there is a peace break in Scene VIII. She has had enough from war; will she stick to her decision? Here, she admits that war has ruined her: “I’m glad about the peace even though I am ruined. At least I’ve got two of my children through the war” (Courage 57). But, when she hears the news that the war breaks out again, she becomes excited and calls off her decision to go to church to say her prayers for Swiss. Peace breaks her neck: “the peace has broken my neck. On the Chaplain’s advice I’ve gone and bought a lot of supplies. Now everybody’s leaving and I am holding the baby” (Courage 58).

Her persistence to make profit out of war costs her dearly. She loses all her three children to war while she is busy in her business transactions. Swiss is executed because he hides away a cash box from the enemy soldiers while his mother has not acted in time and has haggled a lot. Eilif again is executed for attacking peasants and taking their cattle during a peace break. He comes to see his mother before he is executed but she is in the town to get merchandise. Kattrin faced two terrible accidents while her mother was busy in business. Despite all these tragedies, she does not learn and decides to continue her business: “Mother Courage, whose business has brought her children into the war which eventually kills them, is seen at the close of the play, putting her wagon after the army, still continuing her business” (Lyons 90).

As mentioned above, her obsession with business and haggling a lot has led to the execution of Swiss. She even tries to make profit at the risk of her children’s lives. With the cash box in mind, she bargains with Yvette for leasing the wagon. She accepts the deal and decides to pay the ransom for releasing Swiss. But, the moment she comes to know that the cash box can not be recovered, she reconsiders her decision and begins to bargain Yvette for an amount that she can pay back to get her wagon. Her son’s life is so cheap in comparison to her wagon that she can not sacrifice to save him. It took her long time to agree on accepting to pay the ransom. But it was too late. She admits that she has haggled a lot. Later, sergeants bring her
son on a stretcher for identification. At this agonising moment one feels that she will admit her guilt and she will give up her business. Surprisingly, she denies him and signals with her head that she does not know him. No one can believe that Courage will go to this extreme. She is afraid that her business will be terminated if she confesses that the dead body is her own son’s. She values business over human relations. This is what all capitalism is about. After his death she only remembers him when there is a peace break. She plans to go with Kattrin to pray for him in the church but she changes her mind quickly when the war breaks out again.

Brecht intentionally portrays Courage as a business woman whose children are like commodities to her. He associates her business with her children’s misfortunes. Eilif who has been absent from Courage’s eyes for about two years is now to face execution. Courage may not directly be held responsible for his death, but she has contributed to it as seen in the First Scene. Courage appears defiant in the First Scene and tries to defend her sons against being enlisted. Knowing her business-mindedness, one of the recruiters attempts to “Get her involved in a business transaction” (Courage 11). The sergeants were sure that business would keep Courage distracted which would enable them to enlist her sons. She became busy haggling over a belt while her son was taken into military: “Mother Courage loses her sons to the recruiting officer because her impulse to conduct business – to sell the belt to the sergeant – distracts her attention” (Lyons 92).

Courage claims that she loves Kattrin and always appears to protect her, but Kattrin suffers a lot due to her mother’s explicit involvement in war and business. Her dumbness is because of her mother’s involvement in war and business. Later, Kattrin is injured in the forehead which caused a big scar. This unpleasant incident takes place because Courage sent Kattrin to the town to get some goods. Again Mother Courage leaves her daughter in the custody of the villagers while she goes to the town to get more merchandise. She comes back to a miserable and tormenting situation. Her voiceless and deformed daughter has been shot dead by the attacking soldiers. Courage has already lost two sons and now loses her daughter to war while she is busy with her business.

Courage’s greediness and love for money is depicted in Kattrin’s funeral. She bargains at the most unfortunate moment where no one can engage his mind in worldly matters. But Courage does. Her daughter is a corpse waiting to be buried but Courage still bargains with the villagers for reducing the burial charges to save some
coins. She leaves the burial job to the peasants and continues her business asking the soldiers to wait for her. She does not even wait and make sure that her daughter is buried properly. Dead bodies are useless to her as she has done with Swiss earlier when she refuses to identify him as her son. His body has been thrown into “the carrion pit” (Courage 40). Now Kattrin’s body is also not that important to her. This is the heart of a business-oriented person, callous and does not succumb to such emotional moments. For capitalists, as Brecht stresses, war is a desirable condition as seen through Courage whose business career during war flourishes.

Brecht’s aim is to make his audience aware of Courage’s direct responsibility for her children’s deaths. All their deaths appear not to be accidental but happen while Courage is in business especially in the case of Swiss and Kattrin. Eilif’s case might be slightly different because she is not directly responsible for his death. But, she has already given him to the jaws of war which means death anytime. Her determination to continue her business proves the proverb which the Chaplain reminds her of: “…he who sups with the devil must use long spoon” (Courage 60). He wants to remind her of her war-loving nature which will cost her dearly. He tells her that to love war will require patience to bear its consequences. Courage proves to have ‘long spoon’ and continues her business despite all her miseries. At the end of the play, she is alone pulling her wagon after the soldiers. She can not live outside the arena of war.

Brecht portrays Courage as a criminal supporter of war who even sacrifices her own children to war to make profit. All her inhuman actions during the war are related to business and profit-making right from the beginning. She joins the war with her children with the view to making business. Though she is aware of the dangers of war and its plunder, she joins it and never gives up even at extremely critical moments. Brecht blames Mother Courage’s involvement in business for the destruction of her children. The deaths of all her children, as Brecht stresses, happened due to the victimisation of the big people whom Courage chooses to be on their side.

Apart from Mother Courage’s apparent indifference and inadequate measures to save her children against the misfortunes of war, she seizes every opportunity to promote her business. As mentioned above, her responsibility for the deaths of her children for the sake of business, her inhuman actions during war in relation to business are also stressed in the play. Economic motives dominate over her human feelings and sweep them away. With the insecurity that results from capitalism, she
becomes hardhearted and insensitive to others even in adverse circumstances. She refuses to give bandages to the wounded villagers. This significant dialogue between her and the Chaplain reflects her callous heart and business-oriented mind.

THE CHAPLAIN. Staggering in. There are more in the farmhouse. A family of peasants. Help me someone. I need linen! The second goes with him. Kattrin is getting very excited. She tries to get her mother to bring linen out.

MOTHER COURAGE. I have none. I sold all my bandages to the regiment. I am not tearing my officers’ shirts for these people.

THE CHAPLAIN. Calling over his shoulders. I said I need linen!

MOTHER COURAGE. Stopping Kattrin from entering the wagon. Nor a thing! I have nothing and they pay nothing. (Courage 45)

She does not want to lose anything without getting something in return. She does not want to sacrifice her four expensive shirts to these poor villagers who cannot pay the amount. Her commodity serves the capitalist rulers, kings and military officers who can pay her well. She is remorseless and void of human feelings for others around her. She sees some people bleeding and some are amputated and still refuses to give them bandages. Contrary to her Mother, Kattrin feels sorry for the wounded people and rushes to help. She threatens her mother with a board to get some linen. She can not speak but she expresses her feelings through physical actions. She gets into the wagon to get some linen and Courage follows her to protect her items. People are busy with the wounded and Courage is busy thinking about her loss. She can not bear the sight of tearing her expensive shirts to bandage the poor and she shouts at them “Go easy on my expensive linen” (Courage 46). She is an intelligent bargainer and always attempts to ensure some money in any deal. When a soldier sells his bullets, she buys them cheap; when the villagers ask for money for the burial of her daughter she gives them as less as she can; when Yvette, the camp prostitute, bargains with her for leasing the wagon, Courage attempts to keep the sum as low as possible so that she can pay it back. Like Joe Keller in All My Sons who values material advantage over the safety of the pilots, and who cannot sacrifice the business contract for just ‘mere’ cracks in the cylinder heads which can be covered with a paste. Courage also refuses to sacrifice her four expensive shirts to prevent bleeding of the wounded villagers.

Brecht attempted to depict Courage as a capitalist and always insisted that Mother Courage be directed in a way that it portrays Courage with lust for money and
wealth. As said earlier that he never appreciated that Courage be viewed as a tragic victim as Niobe. But, the audience reacted differently, as Christopher M. Sperberg points out: “the public in Berlin responded as the Zürich audience had: they saw in Mother Courage one of themselves, a symbol of the ‘the little people’ swept by the ‘big people’ into a war and into hardships they could not escape” (1). She is one of the ‘little people’ who belong to the little capitalist class of people who could not make much money. Courage herself admits that she is like “a butcher’s dog taking meat … to customers and getting none” (Courage 67). She admits that her business in war is useless. She works hard but ends up with nothing. It is only the clients such as kings and officers who benefit from her being there. This business extends from the big to the little like Courage, the cook and the soldiers who work as agents of making profits which go to the big ones. She is a ‘retailer’ capitalist who makes little profit which usually goes to the ‘wholesaler’ capitalists. Those little ‘retailer’ people seek profit from war but the real profit is made by the big ones. This is how Brecht puts it “… the war itself is the business of the big men who manipulate politics for their advantage, exploiting mankind, and this ethic of exploitation pervades the social structure, making man’s relationship with man primarily a business relations” (Lyons 99).

Mother Courage leaves the stage untouched and unchanged. She has not learnt from her experience that war is futile and it brings only destruction and misery. She could not make any profit without giving something in return. Brecht wants her to leave the stage without change but hardhearted and more determined to continue her business. With this inability to change on the part of Mother Courage, Brecht aims at shocking his audience which may transform them into active participants in the society. If little people like Courage think that they can make profit from the war, then society will remain unchangeable and people will remain themselves subject to destruction as a result of this state of unchangeability. But they should know, as Brecht always stressed, that profit is always made by big people and that little people are exploited as means to achieve the goals of the capitalist class. With this view in mind, Brecht urges his audience to learn from the mistakes of Courage and draw their own conclusions about the prevailing social issues such as war and capitalism which characterised the German society during the 1930s.

Throughout the play, one notices that the undeniable motives of capitalism are clearly depicted. Rulers, kings and military officers are the real plotters of wars and violence to achieve their own capitalist goals. They use religion as a cloak, as the
Chaplain comments, to hide their interests and use it as an incentive to throng their soldiers into battles. Many of the Scenes in the play portray the conflicts between the capitalist leaders themselves over the territories leaving behind destruction, corpses and amputated bodies. The Chaplain blames the leaders for the destruction they cause to humanity and the helpless people. When Kattrin comes back wounded from the town he does not put the blame on the soldier but on his leader because the soldier is helpless and carries out the orders of the higher authority. Brecht also portrays another level of capitalism which lies between the capitalists and the voiceless part of the society through various incidents in the play. The first one begins with the recruiters’ attempt to enlist Courage’s two sons to the Swedish army persuading them to join the army to which Courage appears defiant. It is much similar to the recruiting episode in Moore’s Fahrenheit 9/11, where two Marine recruiters appearing in an attractive military uniform attempt to enlist two youths to the military. In two different Scenes, Brecht gives a vivid presentation between the attacking soldiers and the helpless villagers and townspeople. In Scene V, the soldiers under the command of their officer attack a village, destroy its livestock, injure and kill its people. In Scene XI, the soldiers again attack the village of Halle and threaten its people if they do not guide them to the nearby town, their target. Kattrin is shot dead when she takes a drum up the roof to hit it to warn the townspeople of the danger lurking for them.

Not only the common people but the soldiers are also an object of exploitation. In the play, soldiers are not paid and are humiliated by Courage when they attempt to get drinks for free. A soldier, for instance, snatches away a bottle of wine form Courage’s wagon and Courage snatches away his fur coat which he has stolen during the attack because she knows that he can not pay for the drink. In another occasion, soldiers sell their bullets cheap to Courage to get drinks and food. In Scene IV, a soldier also expresses his dissatisfaction with his captain who has exploited him by withholding his reward and spending it on whores and drinks.

This system of war always results in fighting and conflict between all classes of society as Brecht dramatises in Mother Courage. Some of the common people also fight each other for survival and others want to become rich. Eilif being himself one of the working class attacks the peasants and steals an oxen; Yvette takes advantage of Courage’s critical situation and gives low price to her wagon; the cook refuses to accept that Kattrin accompanies them and demands that Courage goes with him alone; the peasants stand passive to the attack and just pray for the safety of the townspeople.
for the fear of sacrificing their own possessions. These acts of selfishness and love for one’s own life are imposed on them as a result of the domination of the capitalist regime that has spread fear and misery among this class of people. It does not leave for them any choice.

Courage has chosen to be on the rulers’ side exploiting the powerless little people. She does not like to help others except for material gain. Like Joe Keller in All My Sons, Courage only takes care of her children and pays no attention to the rest who are just an environment to her business. Both Courage and Keller sacrifice others to achieve there material gain. But people like Keller and Courage can not make profit and their profit is just temporary and quickly turns to misery and misfortune. According to Brecht and Miller, only the big dogs can survive and make profits from wars while little ones destroy themselves. Keller has already lost one son in the war and the other one decides to leave home; Keller finally kills himself. Similarly, Mother Courage lost all her children to war, but unlike Keller, she did not want to admit her guilt and preferred to continue her business journey.

All My Sons (1947)

In the twentieth century, America experienced a leap in all facets of industry and technology. This progress affected the social life of the labourers and the merchants who constituted the majority of the Americans. Strong competition spread fast among Americans to attain material glory which became one of the major causes of the Depression. The Depression surfaced in America because most of the Americans wanted more than what they already have, resulting in many common people being thrown into deep poverty. With advances in multi-function machines, many people lost their jobs and many more came under the mercy of greedy industrialists. Like Willy Loman, many of the common Americans went through starvation, low wages, and were finally fired when they failed to meet the demands of the market – market only needs young people to chew them and throw them when old. This is the American society – a society based on stark materialism and business orientation. So, a growing economic insecurity continuously haunted the American people during the 1930s and 1940s. The collapse of the American economy which resulted in joblessness, severe scarcity of household articles of basic needs affected the American psyche and led to more impoverishment, constant worry and overall breakdown.
As materialism became the pursuit of the American nation, human values had no space in a man’s world ruled by the capitalistic hands. On the decline of spiritual values, John Gassner in *The Theatre in Our Times* writes: “Materialism and pursuit of the worldly pleasures brought about a general deterioration in the moral and spiritual values” (82). Human values were further debased and eroded in the shadow of the horrors of the Second World War. War and capitalism were just like one coin with two facets, interrelated and interdependent. But, War, according to capitalists, is the only proper environment to revive their economy. On the relation between capitalism and war, MacKenzie argues that the followers of Marx, like Lenin and Bukharin, claim that the profits of capitalism ‘cannot’ be invested domestically and capitalists even conspire to promote war, as a means of reaping grim profits from armaments production (para. 3). This is what Miller too explores in *All My Sons*.

There is no doubt that many wars have been waged for economic and capitalistic purposes. There are various forms of capitalism such as colonialism which is a capitalistic domination over other nations beyond geographical territories to ensure expansion as well as to exhaust the natural resources of the nation colonised. This will be discussed in the next chapter. Capitalism brought along with it all sorts of evils targeting the working class. It gave rise to conflicts and severe animosity between nations and between classes within nations. Some Marxists writers believe that the social conditions of the people living under capitalistic regimes are miserable and are a mere object of exploitation and contempt for the capitalists. As mentioned earlier, writers like Brecht believed that capitalism is only the other face of war and that wars were mainly waged to attain power, to exploit natural resources and to expand and generate a capitalistic market. Wars are waged against the poor and the helpless nations because funds and wealth are mostly in the hands of a small group of greedy capitalists. It is these hands which manage to create the atmosphere and a favourable situation for war against poor nations by intervening in the policies of other countries just to exercise power. This is the subject of the plays in this chapter.

Miller’s *All My Sons* and *The Death of a Salesman* attack American capitalism which forced its individuals to meet the demands of the economic and social structures prevailing in the society. It was that capitalistic society which made Joe Keller and Willy Loman commit suicide. It was that capitalistic society which drove many helpless Americans to engage in wars with other nations overseas. Those capitalists wanted to find an environment to market their stocks and sell their
products. For them, war mobilises, activates and flourishes their business more than peace does. But, capitalism is a curse upon the poor and middle class people and on its evils, David Peeler writes:

… Capitalism’s economic and social injustices seemed obvious than ever and simple commercialism appeared to be one of its lesser evils. Unemployment, hunger, and dispossession were rife, and capitalism seemed determined to drag millions of innocents along with it as it sunk into the grave. (10)

The American economy having collapsed due to the Depression, created a sense of economic insecurity in the American streets during the 1930s. State of insecurity followed by the Second World War exacerbated the American economy further. These successive crises made the Americans aware of the threats of the American capitalism. Majority of the American people were depressed by the policy of their country which got itself engaged in the Second World War even before recovering itself from the Depression. The American economic system patently based on capitalism, produced degradation, despair, and loss of human qualities among a huge number of the Americans. The trauma of poverty, deprivation and exploitation was the story of the day during the years of the Depression as well as during WWII.

Many writers expressed their stance towards the economic, political and social issues cropping up in America over the years. Along with other writers, Arthur Miller attacked the American system from within. He was a restless writer all through his life, unhappy with the politics of his country as well as with its market-oriented. According to Alvin B. Kernan: “Miller is a rebel against … the familiar ogre of commercialism, the killer of values and the leveler of men” (35). Similarly Abbotson affirms: “Since his college days, Miller had felt that America was being run by men of business who were all after private profit, and who merely used those without wealth as pawns. Thus, it made sense to see money and finance as being behind many American conflicts” (31). Abbotson further explains the American situation which shaped Miller’s mind: “Miller sees the constant American quest to be successful, especially in terms of wealth, as a potentially destructive and harmful one. Competition itself often creates negative values which may lead to success, but at what Miller regards as too heavy a price” (31).

Miller has been described by critics, such as C. W. E. Bigspy, as Marxist and that his social commitments led him to Marxism (Cambridge Companion 32), though
he has several times denied any inclination to any ideology. On Miller’s Marxism, Koorey writes: “pulling from Miller’s own early Marxist leanings, All My Sons dramatizes, according to its author, ‘the concept of a man’s becoming a function of production or distribution to the point where his personality becomes divorced from the action it propels’” (40). During the Depression years many Americans turned to Marxism for they believed it to be the only alternative for their society. Like O’Casey’s socialist voice, The Covey, in The Plough, Chris is Miller’s socialist proponent. Chris, like Miller, hates capitalism and wants socialism to spread in the society, but the society does not help much. Abbotson remarks:

This socialist spirit, which had been growing in America since the depression, was at odds with the selfish capitalistic spirit which had captured the country in its postwar economic boom. But Chris, despite his new-found socialism, is still a product of the more traditional generation, and is reluctant to throw away his old values. While he dislikes his father’s capitalism, he still loves his father, and he is confused as to what he should do. (82)

In The Death of a Salesman and All My Sons, Miller attacks severely the American capitalistic system. These two plays were written after WWII to address the emerging issues related to war and capitalism. The first play depicts how capitalism can throw people into deep miserable hardships. The second one is a vivid presentation of the American situation during and after WWII: “conceived in wartime and begun in war time, the play [All My Sons] depicts, according to Miller, ‘the spectacle of human sacrifice in contrast with aggrandizement’” (Koorey 40).

All My Sons was discussed in the previous chapter to point out the impact of war on family members during post-WWII America. Through a close study of the text, this section will examine Miller’s criticism of capitalism and the economic factors behind wars. As stated earlier, one of the main motives behind waging wars is to achieve capitalistic objectives and to raise the economy. In this play, Miller’s main character, Joe Keller, is “the villainous representative of ‘laissez-faire of capitalism’” (Dyer 42). The clash between him and his sons makes clear the capitalistic motives of the father behind shipping out defective heads to the Air Forces. The son Chris can not believe what his father has done. The father claims that he has done that business for the sake of his family – killing twenty-one pilots for the sake of family welfare. Chris explodes in the face of his father: “For family! Where do you live…? Is that as
far as your mind can see, the business? ...What the hell are you? You’re not even an
animal, no animal kills its own…? I ought to tear the tongue out of your mouth. What
must I do” (Sons 158)? The son here remarks on two important things about his
father. That is, his father does not belong to ‘our world’ – the world of human beings.
His father belongs to the world of animals which do not kill their own kind, but Joe
has done it. Chris cannot imagine that his father had knowingly shipped out many
defective heads to save his business at the cost of killing twenty-one pilots. This sense
of irresponsibility to the outer world makes Chris mad at his father. His father intently
business-oriented mind has made him take this selfish decision which only fulfills his
own desire – the desire to attain material glory.

The father attempts to justify his crime to his son by stating that he is not the
only one in that country to do that sort of business. There are many who are doing that
kind of business. If they are to be punished, half of the people of the country will go
to prison. He explains that many capitalists have been doing the same in America for
so many years and this business is being run not only during war time but also during
the time of peace. Capitalists think that war is a good environment for their market.

When George reaches Keller’s house after his visit to his father to inform him about
Ann’s marriage. Keller blame the government for convicting powerless people and
sending them to prison for minor mistakes. He adds that the big ones are rewarded for
their crimes and are usually promoted. Miller, the angry man on the American
capitalistic system, gives a realistic picture of the corruption prevailing in his society.
The big ones are the real war criminals who should be punished. Keller explains to
George the case: “… A little man makes a mistake and they hang him by the thumbs;
the big ones become ambassadors” (Sons 150). George does not like the way Keller is
talking to him about his father and begins to doubt him. He confirms his doubts from
Keller’s speech and when Keller asks about Deever’s condition in the prison. George
responds:

GEORGE. … He would like to take every man who made money in
the war and put him against a wall.

CHRIS. He’ll need a lot of bullets. (Sons 151)

This conversation between George and Chris reflected the American situation during
the war times. Many people were involved in making profits out of war but it was
difficult to punish them and that would ‘need a lot of bullets’. This was the real
situation that Miller wanted to expose his to audience. He wanted his audience to
know that there were many war criminals back home creating real threat to the American youth. There were many such death dealers in America and Joe Keller was one of them. But they were not being exposed to the public because they were in power. They send poor young people to war while they keep their own sons and relatives safe and secure. Many war criminals, like Joe Keller, involve other poor people in war business deals to protect themselves against something going wrong as it has happened with Deever. Joe Keller escaped the charge through a false claim that he was unwell the day Deever shipped out the defective heads. George’s doubts were confirmed when Kate unconsciously stated that Keller “hasn’t been laid up in fifteen years” (Sons 151). Keller corrected her, “except my flue during war” (Sons 151) to which, as Miller remarks, “George stands perfectly still” (Sons 152).

War profiteering is a true motive of American capitalism which is addressed by Moore’s Fahrenheit 9/11 as well. In this film, Moore exposes how capitalists use war to market their products and boost their businesses. In one of the episodes of the film, he exposes Bush’s energy company before and after the war on Iraq explaining the real motive behind the war in Iraq. The company makes a lot of profit after the war and the film maker remarks that the real intention behind the war in Iraq is to stop the economic deterioration of the company and to secure the company from sinking into deep economic crisis.

Chris was disappointed with his father’s mindset. He failed to find the image he was searching for in his father. The image he wanted to see in his father was completely the opposite of what he can not even imagine. This is because:

Joe Keller, like many fathers of his time, cannot possibly live up to such an ideal, given that those same social pressures affecting Chris are also affecting him. Keller tries to offer Chris the only stability he knows in the form of his business, but Chris is looking for a moral stability rather than this material one. (Abbotson 82)

Arthur Miller, through his voice, Chris, expresses his anger and resentment at how “capitalism and materialism operates in the American society” (Abbotson 28). Chris shouts at his father: “This is the land of the great big dogs … you don’t love a man here, you eat him! That’s the principle, the only one we live by – it just happened to kill a few people this time, that’s all. The world’s that way, how can I take it out on him? What sense does that make? This is a zoo, a zoo” (Sons 167). This speech holds the main message that Miller wanted to convey about American capitalism. Through
the voice of Chris, Miller states that America is ‘the land of great big dogs’. According to Miller, only dogs can live and survive in this zoo-like society. Keller’s principal doctrine is ‘be a dog or dogs will eat you’ if one wants to live in the American society. To survive is to ‘kill’ others in this society as Chris remarks. His father did not consider the plane-crash as a disaster. But, for Chris, this behaviour is inhuman and an act of barbarism. He describes the American society as ‘a zoo’ where one animal kills another to live. Man killing man is something horrible especially when it is for selfish gains. Joe tries to defend himself by claiming there are many who do the same business in America and that no one does that for free. He tries to persuade his son that this is the right thing to do in that society where the government is blind to corruption and sometimes even encourages it. Abbotson relates Keller’s action to the society he lives in: “Keller has been taught that it is the winner who continues to play the game, and society can turn a blind eye to moral concerns so long as the production line keeps rolling—this is the essence of capitalism. It is what he tries to teach his son, but it is something his son does not want to hear” (60).

Keller’s action is a normal response to the pressures and demands that was forced upon him by the materialistic society. Like Courage, he has no other choice but to live and sustain his business. Society values man only by the amount of money he possesses and this ruins all human values and social codes. Therefore, he has to choose between two evils – cancelling the business deal which means a great loss that may lead to the poverty and starvation of his family or selling the defective heads to the army and reach the climax of business glory. Sacrificing few unknown people to achieve material success is not a big crime for a capitalist like Joe Keller (rather Joy Killer). He chose the lesser of the two evils. Abbotson points out that Miller did not have many choices to live better in a capitalistic society:

While the best way to survive in a capitalistic system is to become a better and more ruthless capitalist than your fellow workers, this system clearly privileges individuals over their society, and that is what Miller fears could lead to an eventual breakdown of that society.

Many see great wealth as a mark of a person’s success, and this belief fuels many to try to gain such wealth, or at least to own the things it can provide. This is the impulse behind materialism, which can be defined as the desire for the best of everything, from services to
Like many American capitalists, Keller worships the material world. His main concern is to have a continuous prosperity in his business so he can do anything to ensure that his business prospers—even if he loses a relative. He is exactly like Courage who holds business deals during war time to keep her business prosper and flourish. The familial concern for both Keller and Courage is not that important. This is the mindset of the business-oriented people—Keller sells defective items though he knows that his sons are involved in war. He knows that his son does not fly the P-40, but he is not quite precautious about what might happen. It did not occur to him that his son may fly the P-40 if the situation so requires.

No doubt, that Keller is the product of his society. His actions reflect the society which he belongs to. His decision to ship out the defective parts to the army is an immediate outcome to the pressures generated by the forces of the American society. How could he behave normally under such pressures from all corners—he wants to secure a prosperous future for his family in a society that will knock him down if he does not achieve material success. This capitalistic and business-oriented society has placed him in a corner where he has to decide between selling those defective heads and achieve business prosperity or cancelling the deal and suffer huge loss and be levelled to earth under the merciless wheels of American capitalism. Courage was under similar pressures. She, like Keller, was placed in very critical situations several times which always led her to another complicated step. Some of these difficult moments are, for example, her denial of her son Swiss. Due to the fear of a business crisis, she denies that she knows him when the soldiers bring him. The Cook puts her in difficult choice, too, when he tells her that the inn is not enough for more than two, refusing to accept her daughter to join them. Again, this choice is difficult for Courage because she can not leave behind her daughter. This led to further misfortunes on the part of Courage. Her daughter was shot dead. That is, as in Keller, the society does not help her to avoid such misfortunes. Courage was torn between keeping her children safe at home, or taking the side of war in order to secure a livelihood for them. What shall she favour? The home front will be useless for her if she chooses to stay within its limits because she will be under various pressures of war—insecurity, lack of food and probably a real war situation. Therefore, she chooses the war front to confront the adverse circumstances which she has to face any
way. For Courage, war is a better choice and of course a better place to secure her business and keep it going, like Keller. With the passage of time, she gets used to the war situation during which her business vigorously flourishes. She makes a lot of profit when the fight resumes and she gets gloomy when there is a peace break. Courage is exactly a capitalist who finds the war as a good opportunity to market and sell out her goods and warship items.

Similarly, Keller chooses the economics over ethics and morals. This is the situation he has been born into. He can not choose otherwise in a society which glorifies and praises economic success and prosperity over values and manners. This compelling choice has led to worse and complicated situations ending in his suicide. His tragic end is quite similar to that of Willy Loman, the helpless salesman who is also the victim of such an economic system. The culture which these two men, Willy, a salesman and Joe, a business man, were sharing forced them to go through such economic hardships. They ultimately take their own lives – the only alternative to escape their disgusting world. Ronald Hayman explains that Willy Loman is forced to act that way in a capitalistic society:

Because society is oriented toward commercial success Willy Loman can no longer be a useful member of it when he is no longer successful as a salesman. Since the insurance company will pay more for his death than he can earn by staying alive, it is logical for him to kill himself. By suggesting that it values the life of the individual less than it values business efficiency, Miller is implicitly condemning the whole society. (114)

Joe’s two sons are strongly against this materialistic world which degrades man’s relations with his own kind and destroys all human values. Larry and Chris take material success as an enemy to all good values in life. For them, Materialism is a threat to a happy life which should be based on mutual cooperation and fellow-feeling. They have been living in a country which is devoid of these values. Their family is just a small model of the American society. What happens in this family is happening everywhere in America. Therefore, Larry cannot stand the situation any more and decides to commit suicide to escape the shame of his father. Chris is also unhappy with his father’s ethics of business and he believes that his father’s obsession with the material world has made him blind and irresponsible to the world outside his family. He can not tolerate the situation when he discovers that the death of twenty-
one pilots and the suicide of his brother are the outcome of his father’s involvement with manufacturing and selling defective heads to the air force.

Capitalism sacrifices the larger interest of the nation and of the common people for the sake of its own interests regardless of the consequences: This is also true of Joe Keller who cares for his own interest and for the wellbeing of his family. He ignores what his greed and selfishness may cause to his partner. He strives hard to promote his business without paying heed to human values. He shows no sense of responsibility, honesty, or any human feelings that could have held him back from committing his war crime. His engagement in the material world makes him choose that narrow interest over the interest of his ‘big family’ – the society he lives in. This is because human values and materialism can not get along together for a long time and materialism negatively affects human values. On the clash between materialism and human values and on Joe’s justification of his crime, Bigsby in A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama writes:

> It [All My Sons] is an assault on materialism which is seen as being at odds with human values, on a capitalistic drive for profits which is inimical to the elaboration of an ethic based on primacy of human life and the necessity that his own values are those of the world in which he moves. As he asks, rhetorically, ‘Who worked for nothing in that war? When they work for nothing, I’ll work for nothing. Did they ship a gun or a truck outa Detroit before they got their price? Is that clear? It’s dollars and cents, nickels and dimes; war and peace, it’s nickels and dimes, what’s clear? Half the goddamn country is gotta go if I go.’ And his son is forced to acknowledge this, lamenting that! ‘This is the land of great big dogs, you don’t love a man here, you eat him! That is the principle; the only one we live by – it just happened to kill a few people this time, that’s all. The world is that way, how can I take it out on him?’ (167-68)

Joe Keller’s values and concerns for the material success are the outcome of the sweeping commercialism which is a by-product of the American Dream. Like many American citizens, Keller is caught with this ‘infection’. He wants to achieve his dream to be a successful American businessman. Therefore, he does not report the truth about the defective parts to save his business which, as he thinks, may secure his family wellbeing. It is difficult for him to draw back from this difficult situation. He
explains this situation to Chris: “I’m in business ... you got a process, the process don’t work you’re out of business, you don’t know how to operate, your stuff is no good; they close you up, they tear up your contracts, what the hell is it to them? You lay forty years into a business and they knock you out in five minutes, let them take my life away.” (Sons 157)

The World Is A Comedy (1974)

Egypt occupies a crucial place in the world trade routes that connect the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. Capitalistic and imperial powers competed to get hold of Egypt several times. In March of 1919, Egypt witnessed a strong revolution against the British control which forced the British rule to declare Egypt’s independence in 1922 with some parts under the British rule. During his school years, Al-Hakim had played a vital role the 1919 demonstration against the British colonisers and he wrote his first anti-colonial play in 1918 Al Dveaf Al Thaqil (The Unwelcomed Guest), still a manuscript. In 1953, Egypt was declared a republic and the hero of this revolution was Nasser. According to Hala Mustafa, Nasser considered Al-Hakim’s The Return of Spirit a prediction of the 1952 revolution, in which Al-Hakim calls upon the Egyptian people to stand up and revive their spirit by backing a single leader who will bring back that spirit (para. 11). The other important event in the history of Egypt is the 1967 defeat by Israel. This event caused chaos and confusion among the Egyptian public. Some supported Nasser urging him to go on despite the defeat while others criticised his politics of war which cost Egypt a lot. Those critics of war include intellectuals and literary men such as Mahfouz and Al-Hakim. Although Al-Hakim was a strong supporter of Nasser’s regime in his revolution against the British, he later criticised his politics. He believed that the country was deteriorating and that war was futile. Families were living in miserable conditions due to shortage of public services and accommodations. Near the fire lines, people had been forced to vacate their homes for the fear of air raids and lived in underground shelters with poor services and power failures. Due to these conditions, Al-Hakim was not happy with Nasser and the deteriorating situation in Egypt. Yoram Meital in Egypt’s Struggle for Peace writes on Al-Hakim’s criticism of war and Nasser’s regime:

The writer Tawfiq Al-Hakim believed it was a psychosocial phenomenon going back to the first year of the revolutionary regime.

For years, he said, Egyptians had been told of the might of their army;
on the revolutionary anniversaries, huge parades were held, and modern weapons, including missiles, were displayed. Fiery speeches were made. The country paid heavy taxes to strengthen the armed forces. ‘No one -- whether he supported the revolution or opposed it -- doubted the army's ability to hold off the enemy and vanquish him.’ ‘Reason and logic,’ he added, ‘did not allow one to grasp the possibility that our armies might be defeated within a few days.’ The entire atmosphere created by the regime had led people to believe, in blind faith, ‘that our armies would enter Tel-Aviv at 9:00 in the evening [of the first day of the war] at the latest.’ (14-15)

Meital describes Al-Hakim as one of the salient opponents of war who was a peace advocate especially in his last decades. He was dissatisfied with the politics of war in his country and in the world as a whole. He hoped to see the world as one family living peacefully with each other discarding hostilities and conflicts. In the 1970, Al-Hakim had a good deal of literary works and articles to vent his feelings towards the social and political issues. His criticism of Nasirism and its policy of continuous confrontations with Israel appear in The Return of Consciousness (1974), which denounces the ‘spirit’ of his earlier novel The Return of Spirit (1952). Many critics of Al-Hakim attribute this change of attitude favouring the peace process led by Sadat to his longing for Nobel Prize. Many said that he wrote The Return of Consciousness, the same year he wrote The World Is A Comedy, condemning the earlier government’s war policy under Nasser’s leadership. He wanted to attract the attention of the Israeli critics towards his works. After Mahfouz became a Nobel Prize winner, many critics began to criticise both Al-Hakim and Mahfouz for craving for the Prize. They also affirmed that Mahfouz got the Prize for his weakest literary work in comparison to the Cairo Trilogy at that time. These critics claimed that Mahfouz got the Nobel Prize because the novel disrespected Islam and as a result, it was banned in Egypt and was condemned by religious Muslim scholars who compared it to Rushdie’s Satanic Verses (1988).

Whatever his politics, Al-Hakim stated that Egyptians recovered their consciousness after the departure of the leader (Nasser). One of the passages in The Return of Consciousness narrates the conditions during the war and the huge amount of budget spent on military preparations while proletariats were dying and sleeping in streets: “Thousands of millions taken from the sweat of the brow of Egyptians went
down the drain. ... defeat came upon us ... five years and more have passed and Egypt has remained motionless, without war and without peace, spending on its do-nothing army... a fortune with which the Aswan High Dam could have been built twice over” (qtd. in Meital, Struggle for Peace 105). Mahfouz in Death and Resurrection also addresses the importance of sincere negotiations to establish peace and to resolve disputes. He dramatises the state of confusion and lack of direction the people had undergone as a result of the 1967 setback for which he blamed Nasser’s regime which exhausted the country with heavy taxes in the name of preparing for the war with Israel. When President Sadat took over the power, Egypt witnessed rapid changes in all spheres. People hailed him as the Egypt’s hero of peace and war and appreciated his peace policy with Israel which ended with Camp David Peace Agreement for which he received the Nobel Peace Prize. Egyptians considered this event a victory and a dignified action on the part of Egypt, because it meant for them that Israel ultimately realised the power of Egypt in the region.

Egypt suffered a lot due to foreign presence in its soil. It was dominated by colonial and capitalist powers for a long time, first by the French, then by the British colonisers. Later the Soviet Union and the USA competed to get hold of Egypt. During the Cold War era, with the help of the Soviet Union, Egypt led by Nasser focused on building a strong military defence system to prepare for waging war against Israel. This made Egypt prepare huge military budgets by imposing intolerable taxes on the people to increase the budget for the military preparation and defence. People felt unhappy about it as they wanted no war. These developing nations, as Al-Hakim maintained in The World Is A Comedy, serve as a market for capitalist powers. He warns the nations to stop armament race to give a violent blow on the capitalist nations. The play was written during the cold war period in which the world witnessed a strong trend towards armament to maintain ‘balance of power’ which was mainly the objective of the capitalists to bring balance back to their economy. Al-Hakim criticised Nasser’s policy of war and considered it ‘internal capitalism’ for exploiting the farmers and lower class people. He was agitated to find his country represented by Nasser’s leadership as being obsessed with armament and military superiority while majority of the people were in extreme poverty. He also put the blame on the global changes which focused on super military power leading to the invention of atomic bomb which he has criticised in The World Is A Comedy. For
him, it is only the superior powers which benefit from the warring nations and conflicts among the developing countries.

The World Is A Comedy is divided into three acts containing seventeen Scenes and in every Scene the characters change their identities to play a different role taking up various issues on top of which are war, atomic bomb and armament. The first two Scenes and the last two are staged outside the mind of the protagonist, Khalid. The rest thirteen Scenes take place in the subconscious mind of Khalid, after he falls asleep while reading a book on Transmigration of Souls, given to him by his uncle, Khamis. Before he falls into fast sleep, he reads out this passage:

Transmigration of souls ... in some of the beliefs of the Indians and Ancient Egyptians. According to those beliefs, the soul is incorporated in various bodies and each individual will live more than one life. In one of those lives he may be obscure ... he may be famous ... he may be penniless and another time he may be wealthy and live a life of luxury. (Comedy 92)

In his subconsciousness, Khalid wants to be an important man with influential position to get rid of the burdens of life he is suffering from. Khalid is confused, lost and unhappy with his way of life. Al-Hakim uses a broadcaster to peep into Khalid’s conscience airing his distress and restlessness with his work and life in general. At the end of the interview with the broadcaster, he switches to reading the book and then sleeps. He gets up the next morning to the bell of the alarm clock and rushes to work but he is still under the effect of various horrible dreams he has had at night. During sleep, he plays different roles such as the President of an atomic state, Romeo, a Scientist, a Fisherman, and Antony. His colleagues in the office also change roles that suit the nature of Khalid’s new role. They play roles such as a Minister, Juliet, a journalist, a laboratory assistant, a Nurse, and Cleopatra. With the help of these multiple roles they take up every time, they discuss various issues such as war and its relation to capitalism.

The first important role Khalid plays in the drama is in Scene IV where he has been transmigrated into the head of an atomic state surrounded by ministers and he looks busy with lots of work to do. Being a President, Khalid discusses a very crucial issue related to the universe which will change its entire course. It is war, the manufacturing of arms and atomic bombs which have led to the imbalance of the world. The President is concerned with a peace plan which he intends to initiate. He
wants that the world should discard arms and live peacefully away from war and violence. Al-Hakim was concerned with peace and stability because he saw enough of conflict and blood-shedding and came to the conclusion that war is futile and a waste of human power. During his life time, Egypt had gone through revolutions and wars with colonisers and then with Israel and the western powers. These wars cost Egypt huge destruction at all levels under Nasser’s leadership.

In the play, the President could be compared to Sadat, Nasser’s successor. Sadat was hailed in Egypt as the hero of peace and war. Egyptians from different walks of life praised Sadat for his political policy that brought Egypt to prosperity, dignity and peace. Literary men like Al-Hakim and Mahfouz paid tributes to Sadat for his peace initiative with Israel and his strong determination to restore peace after so many years of wars and conflicts in Egypt. In Comedy, the President decides to put an end to war and destroy all arms which, as he thinks, may be a good initiative for other nations to follow suit. It might sound a crazy decision, like that of Musgrave’s in Arden’s Serjeant Musgrave’s Dance. It is the only solution to the world conflicts as the President believes. The president affirms that the people chiefly responsible for wars are the capitalists who hold monopoly companies that manufacture and sell weapons to nations in conflict. Similar to the President’s intention in the play, President Sadat believed that his peace initiative was right and suited Egypt’s circumstances. Here is Sadat’s speech:

If we look back through history we see the horrors brought upon Egypt by war - the martyrs, the destruction, the delays in development. Egypt became a backward country because of the slogan “war is supreme.” This is why I opted for peace…. I thought it was important to create an atmosphere that fostered development, so that Egypt could survive and become a partner in the twenty-first century before it was too late. (qtd in Meital. “Who is Egypt’s ‘Hero of War and Peace’?” 152-53)

The long dialogue between the President of the atomic state and his Minister reflects many shades of the Egyptian politics during Nasser’s rule. This dialogue values Sadat’s policy of peace and criticises Nasser’s policy of war. The Minister, similar to the spirit of the people before the 1967 setback, guarantees victory to the President because of the quantitative and qualitative weapons that they have now. This spirit was widely spread in Egypt during the preparation for waging war against Israel. Victory was assured to people through fiery speeches of military officers and
leaders. People were assured that there was no doubt that enemy would undergo a severe defeat because the authority was allotted “£ E 700 million annually” (Meital, Egypt’s Struggle 105) and that the army was in full swing. The Minister tells the President that the war project includes all necessary war items as the report presented before the President indicates: “anti-ballistic missiles, trans-continental rockets, aircraft-carriers equipped with atomic and hydrogen bombs” (Comedy 103). Al-Hakim affirms that the huge cost of this war equipment goes to the capitalist nations, the only profiteers from wars. Such anti-war and anti-capitalistic views are communicated through a dialogue between the President and the Minister:

PRESIDENT. Prevention of all wars, absolutely. War must be cancelled entirely from our contemporary world. The first step to be taken to prevent war is to destroy the weapons of war.

MINISTER. To destroy the weapons?

PRESIDENT. If we destroy the weapons we shall destroy the notion of war.

MINISTER. That is a decision that is extremely risky!

PRESIDENT. How can it be risky?

MINISTER. The destruction of our weapons offers the opportunity for temptation and encouragement on the part of the enemy to attack us.

PRESIDENT. And why don’t you say that it implies the temptation and encouragement of peace?

MINISTER. Peace cannot be established on the basis of destruction of power, but on the basis of balance of powers.

PRESIDENT. Balance … balance … Since this word was invented the world has lost its balance.

MINISTER. But the balance …

PRESIDENT. We have had enough of this balance. The more you speak about balance, the more balance becomes deficient in everything – in minds, in thoughts and in character. (Comedy 103-04)

This dialogue raises a significant issue the world suffers from. It is the balance of power which has led to wars, destruction and havoc. This balance of power is the outcome of the growing capitalism that endangered the world. Capitalistic nations compete with each other to control the world, especially the developing nations of Asia and Africa through various methods – either through colonisation or by creating
conflicts between the developing countries. This state of warfare facilitates the path for capitalistic powers to tighten their grip around the neck of the nations first by selling them weapons and later by providing them with ‘aids’ in return for unaffordable interests and unconditional demands. The process of recovery takes years and the nations remain exploited and enslaved to the capitalistic nations, which Al-Hakim calls “the monopolizing magnates of big industry” (El-Hakim, Conversation 77).

This balance of power has always dominated the post-war world. It is not only among the giant nations but it has also spread over the rest of the world. Every country attempts to be armed to the teeth even while its people are starving to death. Its importance is in being with balance with its neighbouring country. This is what the President in the play argues about. He points out the dangers of maintaining the balance of power which, he thinks, will never lead to peace but to more and more violence. Mahfouz, similarly, in Death and Resurrection (1969), raises the issue of ‘balance of power’ and insists on the importance of sincere negotiation to resolve the disputes and to establish peace.

Balance of power is absolutely a capitalistic motive and an idea of the capitalists to promote and escalate their level of arm production and make profit especially in the developing nations. It is quite clear that capitalists have succeeded in spreading this tendency to achieve the maximum level of profit and economic power to dominate the world. This tendency has led to several wars and conflicts. In this connection, Al-Hakim remarks: “this concept of strong individual and strong state remained for a long time and caused numerous conflicts and wars” (El-Hakim, Conversation 75). He also thinks that the world will change for the better if domination is replaced by cooperation. In his philosophical dialogue in A Conversation with the Planet Earth translated and published along with The World Is A Comedy, he draws the attention of his readers to the experience of the European nations: “look at the powerful countries in Europe, which used to compete with one another for the markets until they were devoured by wars. Now they are on their way to co-operation in place of conflict and have conceived the idea of establishing the European Common Market” (El-Hakim, Conversation 76).

Al-Hakim had to experience many formative events during his early twenties. After a few years after his participation in 1919 students’ demonstration against the British coloniser, his father decided to send him to France to do his doctorate degree
in law. Al-Hakim showed the makings of a dramatist since his college days and he had written fine plays before leaving for France. During his stay in France (1925-28), Al-Hakim widely read Greek and European literatures which greatly influenced his theatre. The great events of the world such as the two World Wars, the world’s two ideologies – the conflict between Capitalism and Socialism, and the emergence of the New World System represented by the USA seemed to have shaped his mind. These events made him realise that the world was confronting a serious disaster with this blind competition towards armament and military superiority, which only served the goals of the capitalistic nations. He seems to believe that “violence engenders violence” and therefore he called for “coexistence under a regime of peace and universal prosperity and the respect of each country for the system of organization, ideologies, principles, and beliefs of others” (El-Hakim, Conversation 76).

In a similar frame of mind, the President, in The World Is A Comedy, is angry and agitated with the violent state of the world. He determines to stick to his decision of disarmament in spite of the warnings of his Minister. The President’s statements reflect Al-Hakin’s opposition to war and its business orientation:

PRESIDENT. … They say that peace can be realized through the balance of power! And to achieve the balance of power everyone must be armed to teeth! Budgets are made, steel factories make enormous profits and monopolies are granted! Each country is keeping watch over the others. This is what they call the balance of power that will preserve peace! How strange! (Comedy 106)
PRESIDENT. … My grave decision is to do away with war and those who call for war, traders in armaments, millionaires and monopoly companies. (Comedy 107)

Al-Hakim attacks war promoters, arms traders, millionaires and monopoly companies. He considers them responsible for wars and conflicts between nations and inside nations. They get huge amount of profits which come from the violence of war. That is why the Minister warns the President that the decision to do away with war and armament would invite danger on his life because the “men of business will not remain inactive” (Comedy 107).

The Scene ends with a strong note of the President’s intention to abolish war and its mongers who are mainly capitalist traders and millionaires. The Reaper in the following Scene reinforces the fact that capitalists are the ones who are responsible
for wars, destructions and conflicts among nations. Symbolically, the Reaper, representing the spirit of capitalism, becomes alarmed and agitated on hearing the news that the President has decided to do away with war calling for disarmament. This shocking decision makes the Reaper alert to the breaking news and he decides to take away the President’s life before his decision takes effect. The President’s decision on the peace plan threatens the business of the Reaper who will be idle if the peace plan is put into effect. If nations stop warring and begin to disarm, the Reaper’s capitalistic goals will cease to exist. The Reaper prepares himself to accomplish his mission, but the job has already been carried out by someone else because profiteers are many and no one can wait till the President gets his plan done. A shot is heard when the Reaper and the Registrar are discussing the threat of the President’s peace plan. It is the President who is shot; it is this advocate of peace who has fallen a victim at the hands of a cruel capitalist.

Like Musgrave, the President in Al-Hakim’s Comedy adopted a very hard doctrine to establish non-violence. Both of them did not know the complexities of the world around them. Complete pacifism is impossible to found. The President’s plan for disarmament and peace failed and he was shot dead before his plan saw the light. Musgrave’s plan also was not fulfilled and he was imprisoned. These two pacifist people had been ‘extremists’ in their peace ideologies. The President jumped to the idea of abolishing arms production without taking gradual and reasonable steps to work out a peace initiative which might have succeeded. Similarly, if Musgrave had worked on another logical plan other than killing twenty-five people, his plan might have also been accepted and appreciated by the townspeople.

The murder of the President is prophetic. The play was written in 1974 during Sadat’s rule who had been an advocate of peace. He did his best to bring peace and stability to the Egyptian society and he ultimately achieved this by signing a peace agreement with Israel in 1978 at the White House. Three years later, specifically in 1981, President Sadat was assassinated by Islamic military fundamentalists who did not appreciate Sadat’s peace agreement and negotiation with Israel. The warning came true as Al-Hakim had predicted. There are many who like peace but only a few narrow-minded people like violence and conflicts to go on. These people may belong to a religious organisation or a political group who want to achieve their political and religious goals through war environment and attempt to discourage and hinder any peace proposal. Such peace plans are aborted by the profiteers of war. The Minister

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has already told the President that his life will be in danger if he takes up this stand against war.

Al-Hakim exposes his audience to another episode of the destructibility of war. Scene XII discusses the nature of weapons used in modern times, their level of destruction and their immediate effect on man and nature. Al-Hakim takes his spectator to an island where an atomic experiment is going to take place. He attempts to expose the negative effect of war on a proletariat represented through the depiction of a fisherman living on the island who led a simple life away from the tensions of the modern age and its hazardous technology and weapons. But, even there, in a remote place, man is threatened and displaced and is asked to leave that peaceful island. Al-Hakim through the speeches of the fisherman portrays the simplicity of the common man against the monster of war and its capitalistic motives.

FISHERMAN. Yes, the guns used in war; I know them.

NURSE. Now, there is something that is a million times more powerful than the old guns that you know about. Nowadays, there are things that are called atomic bombs. When they are dropped beside a small island like this the whole island will disappear and will be swallowed up by the sea. Do you understand now?

... 

NURSE. Do you know the effect of these atomic bombs? They are not capable of making this island disappear, but they are capable of destroying the whole world, with its cities, towns, adults and children!

(Comedy 150-51)

Al-Hakim makes many references to those who control the world with their power of domination and destruction. It is the power of some imperial and capitalist nations that grab and exploit the poor nations. He calls them devils and that their action an act of madness. In this Scene between the nurse and the fisherman, Al-Hakim refers to western capitalist powers and their intention to get hold of the world in general and Egypt in particular. Similarly, the Giant in Mahfouz’s Death and Resurrection, represents the capitalistic nations. The Giant attempts to intervene in the politics of another nation, namely Egypt. He exposes his power and imposes himself on the man, symbolically Egypt, without any prior consent. In addition to his domination, the Giant dictates certain conditions on the Man to fulfil which violate
the Man’s rights and dignity which he tries to assert on his land. In the above conversation, Al-Hakim states that no one can hold the capitalists from carrying out their actions and no one can stand in their way of destruction because they possess this enormous power that can demolish the entire world. The sophisticated weapons they invented have resulted in many unusual diseases and epidemics as happened to the fisherman who stayed away, yet he was affected by atomic radiation as revealed after analysing his blood.

This play is like a series of episodes most of which revolve round the themes of war and violence. It begins with President’s plan for peace leading to his assassination, then comes the atomic experiment, and after that comes the leader’s military plan in Scene XV. In this Scene, the leader inquires Antony’s spirit about how successful his plan is. He is planning to wage a war against his enemy and expects Antony’s spirit to give him the right answer because the leader assumes that Antony’s spirit knows well about war and victory. Antony’s spirits ask the leader to explain his military plan. The leader tells the spirit that he has sufficient number of jet planes which are faster than the speed of sound. Again, Al-Hakim draws the readers’ attention to the nature of weapons used in modern warfare which are different from those of old ages. Al-Hakim attempts to tell his reader that when there is a will to kill there is always a weapon available but they are different in modern times and rapidly kill women and children in groups and demolish cities and towns in seconds as stated by the nurse. From atomic bombs to Jet planes and God knows what else awaits the humanity. This leader is a product of the capitalist regime which, as the nurse describes, is “an enormous case of madness as big as the whole world” (Comedy 152). Here, Al-Hakim makes a reference to the western powers and their interference in the politics of the world and their unchallenged domination. He communicates to his audience that war is a game of business and capitalism which cannot be terminated as long as there are arms and weapons.

The play ends on the note that war will continue from one generation to another as a consequence of both the human nature and the systems which generate wars, namely capitalism. With this game of the capitalists who prefer the continuance of war. Al-Hakim again presents his audience with another image of capitalism in Scene XII dramatising the capitalistic domination over the world. Like Mother Courage which ends on a note that war will continue for generations because of people’s passiveness and their contribution to war, The World Is A Comedy also ends
with a similar note. As long as there are war traders and war profiteers, the cycle of war will never end and any human effort to break this cycle will not succeed.

Brecht and Miller criticised capitalism and drew the attention of their audiences to the evils of modern wars and capitalism. Brecht used the epic theatre leaving his audience to think about the consequences of war in relation to business. He urged them to think a lot about Mother Courage’s determination to continue her business deals throughout the war. With the help of the epic theatre, Brecht attempted to engage his audience intellectually with the prevailing social issues of war and capitalism. With this attempted intellectual engagement he expected them to react against these two evils. Unlike Brecht, Miller engaged the emotions rather than the intellect of his audience into the social issues. All My Sons ended with Keller admitting his guilt and taking an extreme step in punishing himself with a shot in the head for the crime he committed against humanity. The audience might be relieved when Keller had shot himself. But others who knew the environment he was born into would feel sorry for him, because he was, like many others, a victim of capitalism.

Keller and Mother Courage have many things in common. Both of them fear that their family may fall in unfavourable conditions. Therefore, they have to act accordingly to ensure that the family can live the life they want and shield them against the threats of poverty. Of course, the contexts of the two families are different. Joe Keller is a big businessman and in a better position but his greed for making more profit leads him to commit a war crime which disrupts the whole situation. Mother Courage’s situation is quite different from that of Keller’s. She has been living in straitened circumstances and thus her choice to join war for business does not make a big difference to her. She has to choose the better of the two evils. Staying at home will not bring the family good and they may starve to death. Therefore, she decides to join the war with a view to do business to maintain her family. The circumstances that made Keller decide to commit his unforgivable war crime are different from those of Courage. He has affluent wealth but wants more which makes his war crime horrible and unjustifiable. However, Santosh K. Bhatia does not put the blame on Keller for committing such a war crime:

Joe Keller has not committed the crime willfully after a careful examination of its possible dreadful consequences. He made his decisions under the pressure of circumstances. What impelled him was fear of losing his business for the success of which he had struggled for
forty years. He asks his son: you lay forty years into a business and they knock you out in five minutes, what could I do, let them take my life away? (35).

Al-Hakim presented his audience with war and its various dimensions without much elaboration, moving from one episode to another quickly leaving his audience draw their own conclusions. His play ended without giving a clear answer to the issue of war and it explained that the people desire to live outside the system that generates war and violence. But this desire fails and people are thrown back again into the cycle of violence. When Khalid, through his different incarnation, attempted to escape this cycle, he was pulled back by the forces of war.